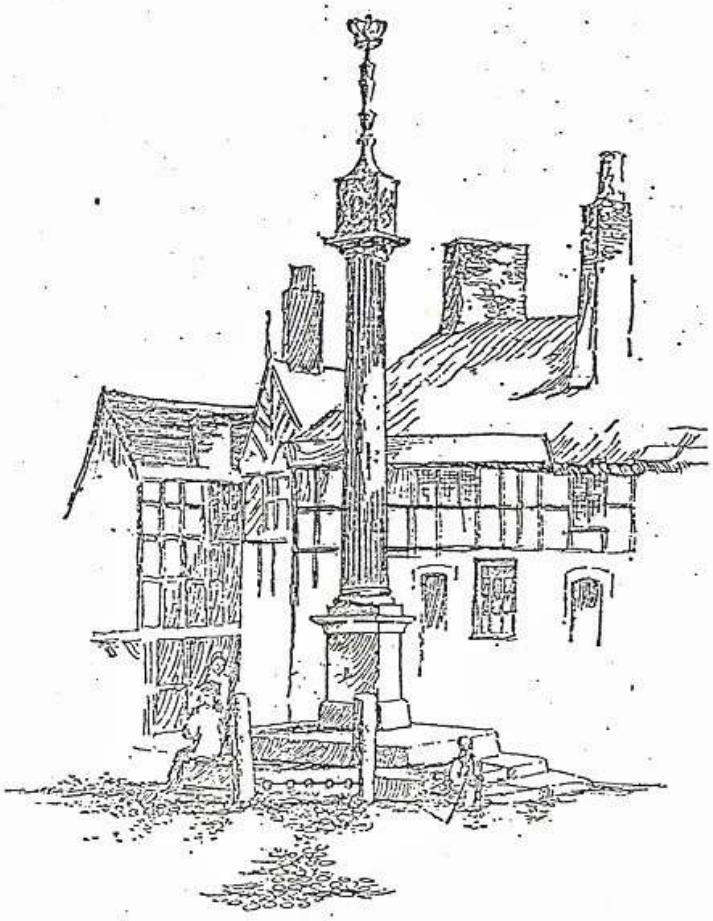
GREATER MANCHESTER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

SALFORD:
AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST



1. INTRODUCTION

The town of Salford stands on the right bank of the River Irwell, just below its confluence with the Irk, and is encompassed by a wide meander of the river on all sides but the south-west.

Modern development has so disguised the natural topography of the area that it is now difficult to visualise the town's development prior to the Industrial Revolution. However, reference to such early maps as William Green's 1794 Map of Manchester and Salford, and a consideration of the drift geology of the Salford area allows some reconstruction of the natural landscape to be made.

Green's map (fig. 4) shows a broad plateau of elevated land extending from the Irwell bank in what is now the Adelphi area, north-eastwards to Blackfriars Road, and thence irregularly southwards to rejoin the Irwell in the Princes Bridge area. It was this plateau, known variously as 'The Banks' or 'Shaw Brows', which Hampson (1946) argued to be a prehistoric defensive enclosure, but which is in fact quite clearly the 25-foot or 'High' terrace of the River Irwell. Thus the Irwell at this point formerly meandered over a broad flood plain, nearly a kilometer wide, extending from Shaw Brows in the west to Stannyhurst in the east.

The formation of Salford's floodplain probably dates from the immediate post-glacial period (c. 8000-5500 BC), when the melting of the ice-sheets released vast quantities of glacial detritus into the rivers and streams draining the Pennine and Rossendale uplands. The material was thus carried down to the Manchester Plain and there deposited as a series of alluvial terraces, culminating in the formation of the recent floodplain. The process of terrace formation has been halted in recent times by the canalisation of the Irwell, but it may be noted that the old Township boundary between Salford and Broughton, although nominally coinciding with the course of the Irwell, diverges from it at several points, thus demonstrating that the river continued to alter course well into the historical period.

The resultant geology of the Salford area may be divided broadly into the heterogeneous alluvial deposits of sand, gravel and boulder clay which make up both the High Terrace of the Shaw Brows area and the floodplain on which the town of Salford later developed, and the Triassic sandstone scarp of Hunt's Bank, which still forms the eastern margin of the Irwell valley.

2. THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD

During the prehistoric period the Salford floodplain would probably have been a broad expanse of marshland supporting willow, alder and birch 'carr' woodland. It would thus have represented an unattractive prospect for prehistoric settlement, which was more likely to have taken place either on the better-drained river terraces to the west of the town, or on the lightly-wooded, sandy ridges of Broughton, Kersal and Prestwich to the north.

This view is largely supported by the available archaeological evidence, although the high proportion of chance nineteenth-century discoveries amongst the finds prompts a degree of caution.

Flint finds from the gravel terraces have included a core from Ordsall Lane, a flake from Albert Park and a scraper or knife from Irwell House, Lower Broughton. Nodular flint occurs amongst the gravel and would have provided a ready source of raw material for the manufacture of finished artifacts.

Irrigation work further down the Irwell at Mode Wheel has produced a perforated diorite axe-hammer of late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age date (c. 2500-1400 BC), and a crescentic gold 'bulla' ornament, possibly an Irish import of the late Bronze Age (c. 1400-600 BC).

It has been suggested that Salford might have been an important fording-point of the Irwell in the later prehistoric period, but the general distribution of prehistoric finds (especially metalwork) seems to exhibit a denser concentration further downstream in the Eccles and Warrington areas.

Predictably, the strongest evidence of prehistoric occupation in the Salford area comes from the sandy heights to the north and west of the town. Neolithic or Early Bronze Age settlement sites, represented by surface scatters of flintwork, have been identified at Kersal Moor, Rainsough and Claremont sandpits (Pendleton), whilst the latter site has also produced a number of 'microliths' of Late Mesolithic date (c. 5500-3200 BC).

Further evidence of prehistoric settlement of these elevated areas was provided by the discovery of an Early Bronze Age inurned cremation in a ditch at Broughton Old Hall in 1873.

Whilst it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions as to the exact nature of prehistoric settlement in the area, it is, nevertheless, clear that the Irwell gravels and flanking sandy ridges underwent significant colonisation during the early prehistoric period, and it is to be hoped that further evidence of the nature of this colonisation will be forthcoming in the future.

3. THE ROMAN PERIOD

The Roman fort and civil settlement of Mamucium stood on a Triassic sandstone plateau at the junction of the Rivers Irwell and Medlock, in the area now known as Castlefields. It was strategically placed at the junction of the important east-west road connecting the legionary fortresses of York and Chester, and the northward route from the Midlands to Ribchester and Carlisle, and commanded fording points of the River Medlock at Knott Mill and the Irk at Hunt's Bank.

The Ribchester road, after crossing the Irk, continued northwards through Broughton approximately along the line of Bury New Road. Several finds have been made along the course of this road, including three late fourth-century AD bronze coins from Higher Broughton, a silver denarius of Septimius Severus (AD 192-211) from Cromwell Bridge, and a silver ring with an 'intaglio' gemstone from St. John's Church. In addition, pottery and other finds from the Rainsough area suggest that, as in the prehistoric period, settlement was taking place along the sandy ridges overlooking the Irwell Valley.

There is no evidence of Roman occupation on the Salford floodplain itself, which probably remained a broad tract of marshland, presenting an obstacle both to direct settlement and to passage across the Irwell from Manchester. Further south, however, the Irwell Valley enters a narrow stricture around the area now occupied by Princes Bridge. It is at this point, directly opposite the Roman Fort on the east bank of the Irwell, that the so-called 'Woden's Ford' was situated. This is first recorded as "Wodarneforde in Irelwyl" (Earwaker, 1887, 249) in a late thirteenth-century deed from Agecroft Hall, but local tradition clearly linked it with an earlier period, and the recent discovery of a north-westward exit road from the North Gate of the Roman fort (possibly destined for the Roman settlement at Wigan) strongly suggests that the Roman ford over the Irwell may have been situated at this point. It seems clear that, until the draining of the Salford floodplain, the Woden's Ford area would have represented the most convenient point at which the river could have been forded. The exact westward course of the road after crossing the Irwell is largely conjectural - it may have approximated, for example, to the line of the modern Liverpool Street - and clearly any archaeological evidence for the existence of such a road west of the Irwell would be of great importance.

4. THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

It is uncertain when the Manor of Salford first became established, but by the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 it was of sufficient importance to have given its name to one of the six administrative areas, or 'Hundreds' into which the "land between Ribble and Mersey" was then divided. The Domesday entry for Salford Hundred refers to 21 'berewicks', or subordinate manors, and four manors, of which the capital manor was Salford itself. Of this the entry records:

> "The king held Salford. Therein 3 hides (i.e. perhaps as much as 360 acres) and 12 ploughs for the land. Waste and forest 3 leagues (i.e. c. 5 miles) long and as much wide, and therein many leys (deer enclosures) and an eerie for hawks."

Thus Salford was originally a large manor (considerably larger than the later Township) held directly by the king. When William I granted the entire Salford Hundred to Roger de Poitou after

the Conquest he, in turn, granted Manchester to the de Grelley family but retained the principal Manor of Salford directly 'in demesne' as part of the Honour of Lancaster. It later passed again into the king's hands and has retained its status as a Royal Manor until the present day.

Apart from the sparse details furnished by Domesday Book, little is known of the precise form of the early Manor. The place-name 'Salford' probably denotes 'the ford by the willows' (O.E. 'salh'-willow), and it seems very probable that by the early medieval period occupation had encroached upon the flood-plain of the Irwell, the focus of settlement moving from the river terraces and the southerly 'Woden's Ford' north to the Stannyhurst ford, which connected the Manor of Salford with its close neighbour, the developing Township of Manchester.

It is noteworthy that, although the Manor of Salford was the secular capital of Salford Hundred, it was ecclesiastically subordinate to Manchester, whose Parish Church of St. Mary was later to become Manchester Cathedral. Thus the Royal Manor House would probably have been situated near the head of the ford to allow easy access to the Parish Church across the river, and indeed late medieval references to 'Salford Hall' in this area may indicate its former site.

In the centuries following the Conquest, however, Salford developed not only as a Manor but also as a town. In 1226 the rental of Salford itself was assessed at 23s 0d, with the Township as a whole (including Broughton, Ordsall and part of Flixton) paying taxes to the king amounting to 112s 0d. Two years later, Henry III granted the town the right to hold a Wednesday market and a three-day fair on the eve, day and morrow of the Nativity of St. Mary (7-9 September). By the following century market day had changed to Monday, and two fairs were held annually - on the feast of St. Leonard (6-7 November) and on Whit Monday and Tuesday.

It was in the year 1230-1, however, that the civic development of Salford received its greatest stimulus when the Lord of the Manor, Randle de Blundeville, Earl of Chester, granted the town a charter creating it a Free Borough.

The charter, which was the model for the later charters of Manchester and Stockport, took the unusual form of a long and detailed list of the privileges and responsibilities of the citizens or 'burgesses' of the new Borough. Each burgess received a land allotment, or 'burgage', of 1 acre for a yearly rental of 12d. The burgage could be sold or bequeathed to anyone (apart from the Church) on payment of 4d to the Lord of the Manor, although the burgesses widows and heirs took precedence of ownership.

The charter conferred important trading privileges upon the burgesses and their families, including protection against 'foreign' traders operating elsewhere within the Hundred, and freedom from all tolls (except salt) at markets and fairs throughout the lord's lands. These trading clauses no doubt did much to encourage the growth of the Salford textile industry in later centuries.

The charter also established a Borough court, known as the 'Portmanmote' or 'Laghmote', at which the burgesses had the right to trial by their peers for such offences as debt, short-measure of bread or ale, and assault, as well as the more serious crime of theft. Fines of up to 12d could be imposed, although in cases such as persistent short-measure the law allowed the stronger penalty of the pillory or tumbrel. The burgesses also had the right to elect officers to administer the town's affairs. The chief municipal office was that of Borough Reeve, to which were added in later centuries constables, 'burleymen' (or bye-law men), 'miselayers' and 'misegatherers' (tax assessors and tax collectors), and aletasters.

Other burghal privileges, such as the right to free timber and pasturage in the woodlands around Salford, were laid down in the charter, but alongside these were a number of clauses re-affirming the powers of the Lord of the Manor. These included stipulations that all bread for sale be baked in the lord's bakehouse, that all corn be ground at the lord's mill (at a levy of 1/20th by volume), and that the burgesses were liable to 'tallage', or taxes, as and when required by the lord. In addition, the Portmanmote was to be presided over by the lord's

steward or bailiff, and the customary feudal subservience was further symbolised by the surrender of a weapon to the lord on the death of each burgess. Thus, although the charter conferred a great measure of economic and civic autonomy on the new Borough, the degree of autonomy was limited by manorial power, and it was probably for this reason that in 1341 Salford, like Manchester, failed to be assessed for tax purposes as a Borough.

Our knowledge of the topography of medieval Salford rests largely upon maps of the post-medieval period (figs. 1-4), but earlier documentary references indicate that the basic plan of the town remained largely unaltered until the eighteenth-century.

The town plan was an irregular triangle, formed by Back Salford (later Greengate), Sergeant Street (later Chapel Street) and Gravel Lane. Houses, shops and inns clustered along these streets, whilst the interior of the triangle was probably occupied by garden plots, orchards or crofts. It may be noted that a number of medieval buildings survived in Salford until the present century. These included the timber cruck-built Bull's Head on Greengate, demolished in 1938, 'The Shears' also on Greengate, the 'Fisherman's Hut' at the eastern end of Chapel Street, and a number of unnamed examples.

The market was held on the rectangular village green on Greengate, near its junction with Gravel Lane. Here stood the marke cross, the stocks and the town conduit, or pump, and alongside was the exchange building or courthouse, in which both the Portmanmote and the Salford Hundred Court sat.

At the eastern edge of the town, Greengate and Chapel Street converged to cross the Irwell into Manchester, and the position of the original ford may be indicated by their convergence slightly upstream of the later bridge. It is clear, however, that a bridge had existed near the site of the Victoria Bridge from as early as 1226. This was a three-span sandstone bridge with two piers (not three, as represented in some early maps), and was only some 13 or 14 feet wide. It was widened twice in the eighteenth-century and finally demolished in 1837. On one

of the piers stood a small chantry chapel of the type commonly found on medieval bridges in the north of England. Although the chapel is usually dated to 1365 or 1368, a reference to one "Henry, the chaplain of Salford" in the Coram Rege Rolls of 1323 (Tupling, 1949, 115) implies that it already existed at that date and may even have been integral with the bridge. The chapel was repaired in 1505, but was suppressed later in the same century, and subsequently served as a lock-up until the construction of the New Bailey Prison in 1787.

Other important landmarks of the town included the "common oven", rented by a free tenant for 4s 0d in 1346, the 'Lady Pirle' spring next to the Irwell (which was later believed to be invested with curative powers), and, by implication since the name "Randle the miller" appears as early as 1317, at least one mill.

Beyond the town, Greengate continued north-westwards as a hedged bridle path, crossing the Irwell towards Broughton at 'Salford Ford', in the area now occupied by Broughton Bridge. Chapel Street ran westwards from the town to White Cross Bank, Shaw Brows (where a wayside cross probably stood), and thence onwards to Eccles, Barton and eventually Warrington. This represented the major westerly road from Salford and Manchester in the medieval period.

Branching from the south side of Chapel Street was a footpath (Ordsall Lane) leading towards Ordsall Hall, the moated manor house of the Radcliffe family from c. 1330. Although Ordsall was a separate manor in the thirteenth-century, it had subsequently become merely a 'demesne' farm or estate of the Radcliffes. An inventory of c. 1380 lists, in addition to the Hall itself, stables, granges, shippons, a garner or granary, a dovecote, an orchard and a windmill, as well as 80 acres of arable land and 6 acres of meadow. It thus represented a substantial agricultural estate on the southern fringes of Salford Township, and as such seems to have resisted development and fragmentation even until the eighteenth-century, when Hill's map of 1740 (fig. 2) depicts it standing in isolation within a wide loop of the Irwell. The same map shows a kiln and a mill to the north of the Hall, alongside the track leading to Regent

Road. Also in this area was the so-called 'Woden's Den' which was probably a natural sandstone cave used as a hermitage in the medieval period.

Medieval Salford was, therefore, a small, compact market town whose economic basis rested largely upon agriculture. A survey or 'extent' of 1346 recorded that a total of $129^{1}/3$ burgages then existed in the township, and some later maps such as that of Casson and Berry (fig. 3) show that the elongated 'strip' fields, so characteristic of medieval agriculture, survived as late as the eighteenth-century in some areas of the town - most notably to the north-west of Gravel Lane, where they extended as far back as the line of the modern but aptly-named Garden Lane. The Manchester tithe corn books of 1584 (Crofton, 1904) record the yields of some of these fields and show that oats, barley, wheat and beans were being extensively grown around the town.

Even the growth of the textile industry, which was having such a dramatic affect upon the prosperity of both Manchester and Salford, and which was reflected by the appearance around the town of such field names as 'Tenter Croft' and 'Yarn Croft', did not wholly disrupt the agricultural basis of the town. The inventory of George Holt for example (Lowe, 1972), a wealthy Salford woollen clothier who died in 1598, lists, in addition to his house, workshop, warehouse and material, such agricultural items as corn, hay, ploughs and cattle.

Nevertheless, the expansion of the textile industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries clearly had a profound affect upon the town, not least through the philanthropic works of such merchant clothiers as Humphrey Booth, the founder in 1635 of the Sacred Trinity Chapel, which, fifteen years later, became Salford's first Parish Church. The following century saw great development take place in the town, and this is again reflected in Hill's map of 1740 (fig. 3) which shows that Salford was then beginning to extend beyond its original nucleus, most obviously in a westerly direction, where development in the Oldfield Road, Cross Lane and Regent's Road area began to blur the distinction between Salford and the neighbouring township of Pendleton. Thus the process of urban expansion,

which reached its climax in the urbanisation of the Industrial Revolution, was already becoming apparent in Salford during the textile boom of the early post-medieval period.

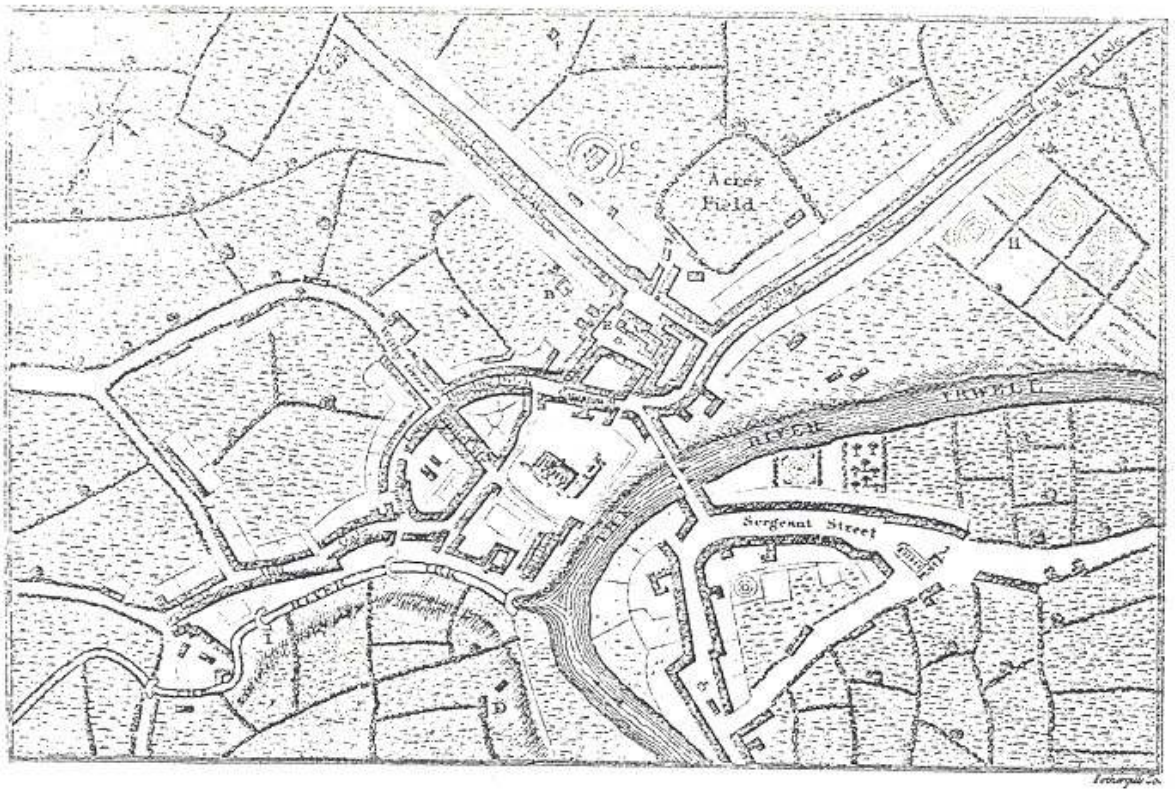


FIG. 1

Map of Manchester and Salford c. 1672.

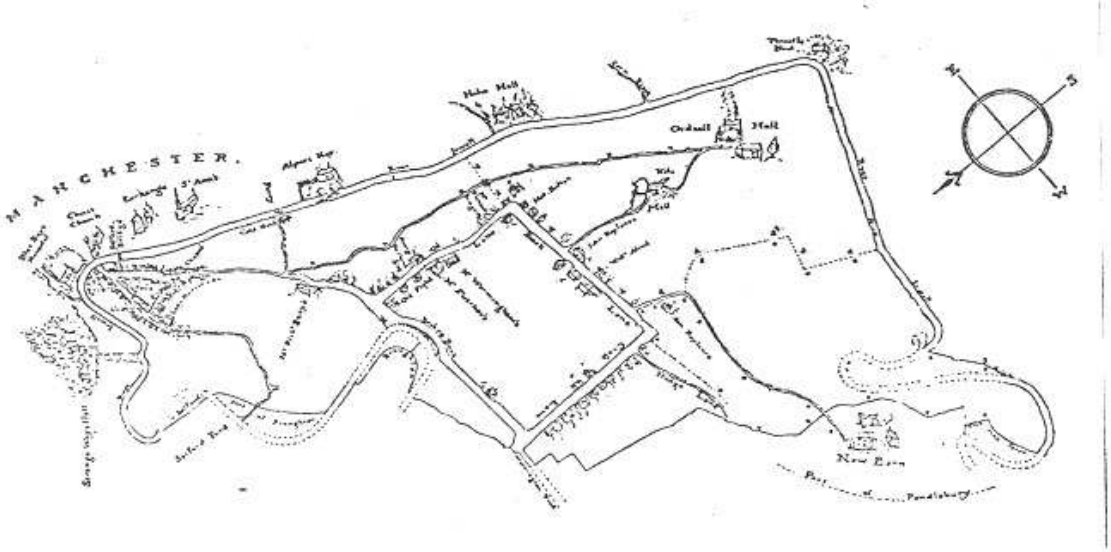


FIG. 2

Hill's map of Salford 1740.

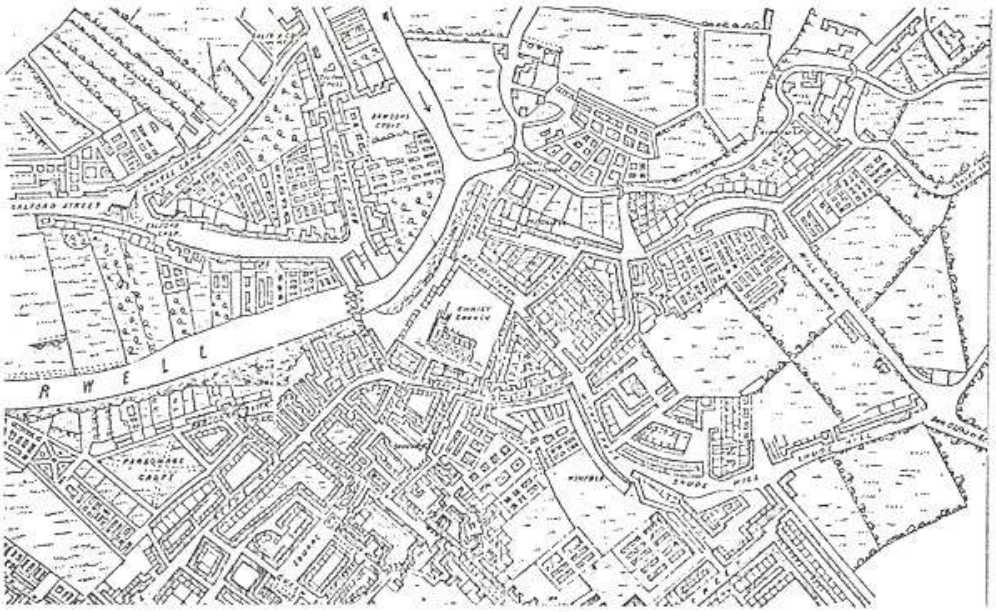


FIG. 3

Extract from Casson and Berry's map of
Manchester and Salford 1750.

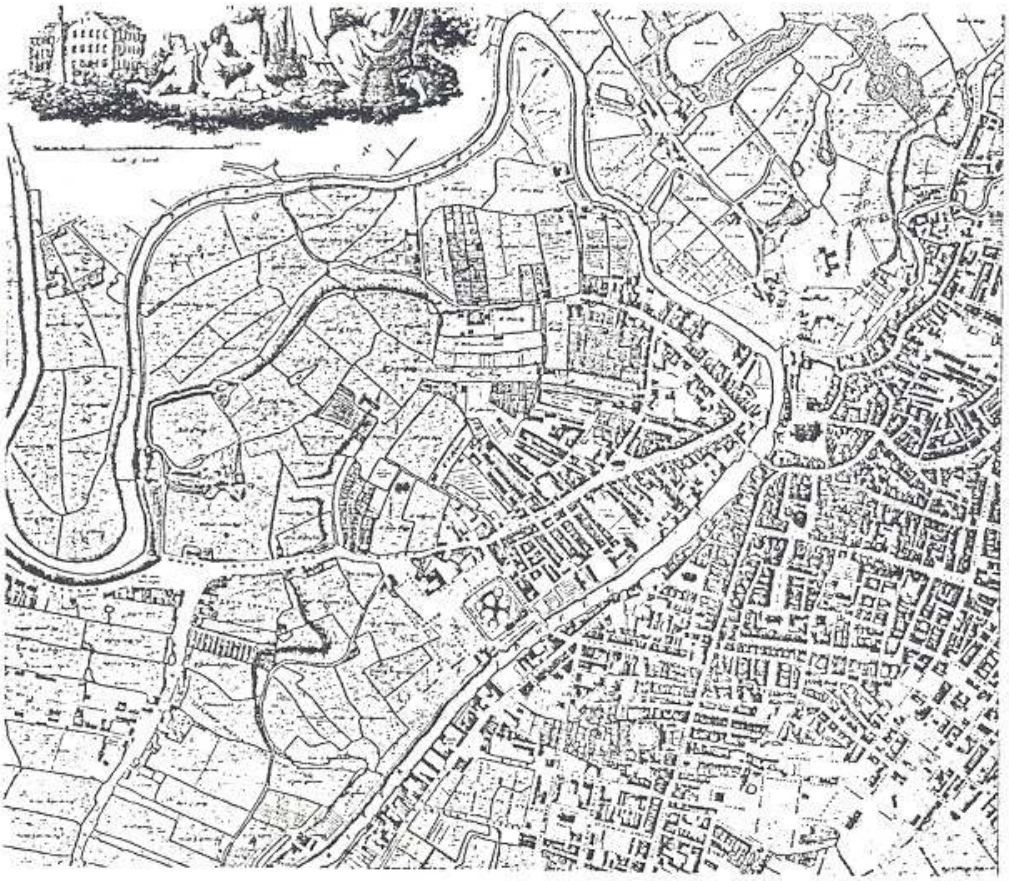
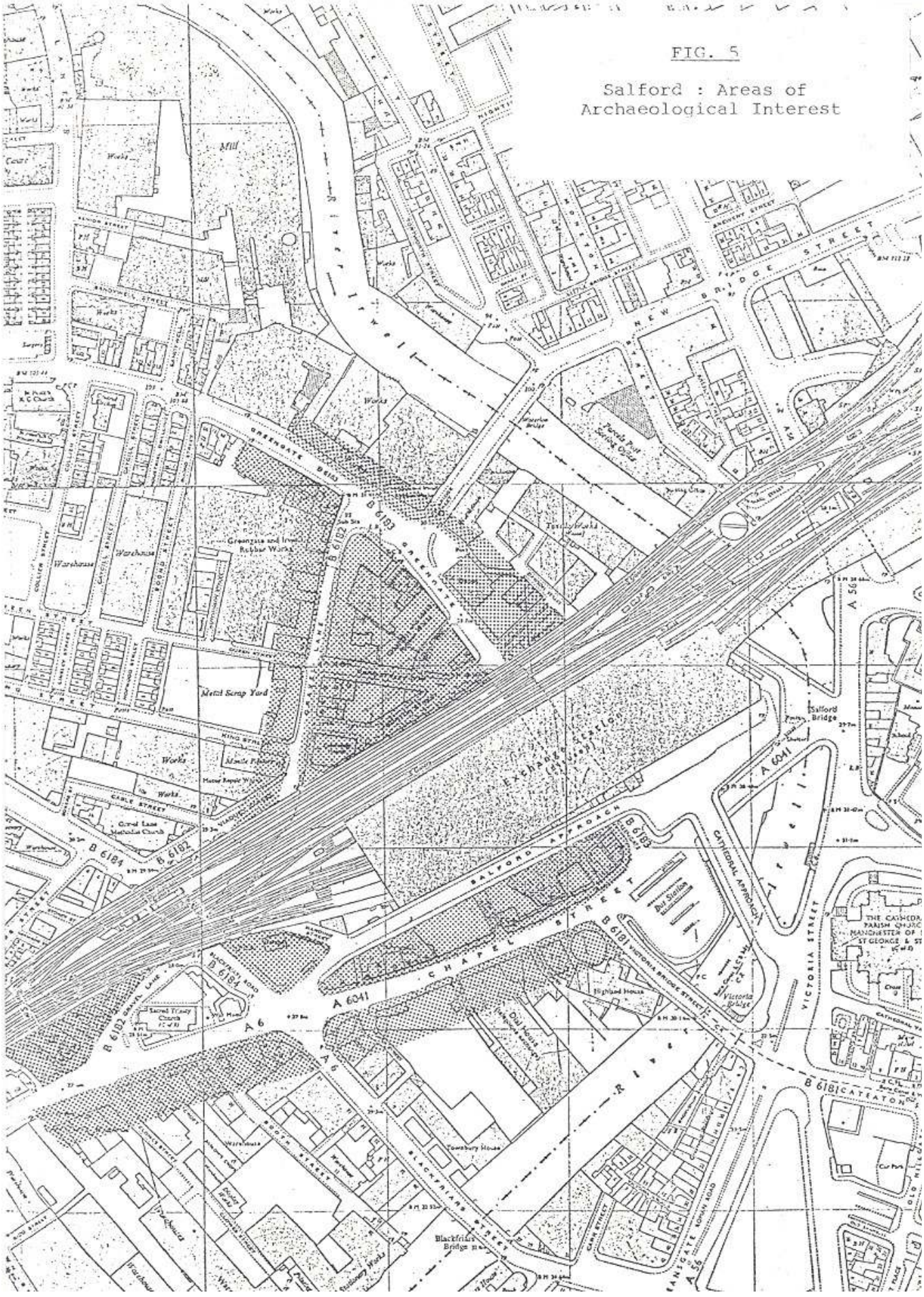


FIG. 4

Extract from William Green's map of
Manchester and Salford 1787-94.

FIG. 5

Salford : Areas of Archaeological Interest



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